

*"The CCC: Where You
Make the Difference!"*

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The California Conservation Corps

FRONTLINE

Summer 2002

UNITY GAMES PROVIDE A SCORCHING GOOD TIME

The weather wasn't the only thing that sizzled at the California Conservation Corps' Seventh Annual Unity Games in Sacramento in July.

The Games featured several heated hoops contests, blistering volleyball matches and other hot individual and team performances in various sporting match-ups.

Some 19 teams from across the state came together at the annual Unity Games under a sweltering sun for a weekend of friendly, fun and spirited competition. In addition to basketball and volleyball games, teams also faced off in swimming, crab soccer, relay races, balloon toss, broom-can relay and Frisbee competitions.

This year's games — with nearly 400 participants — included representatives from the Sacramento and Fresno Local Corps programs, and a contingent from Down Under who are working in the United States as part of the CCC and Australian Exchange Program.

CCC Director Wes Pratt welcomed the throng to Cosumnes River College, where the Unity Games take place each summer.

"Welcome friends, sponsors and supporters of the CCC Unity Games and thank you CCC staff for 25 years of dedication to our youth," Wes said. "Keep in mind, the reason for the Corps — Esprit de Corps — the spirit of the Corps. In a post 9/11 world, the CCC mission is all the more critically important. You are vital to our state, to our world, to your communities and to yourselves. Continue to work hard to fulfill your future by pursuing skills, GEDs, high school diplomas, careers in public service."



Photo: Cynthia Aguayo

The California Conservation Corps' Seventh Annual Unity Games gave corpsmembers a chance to show off various skills and catch up with old friends. Here, a corpsmember participates in floatation device race.

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DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

UNITY IN THE CCC COMMUNITY

On July 13 and 14, I had the pleasure of participating in the CCC's Seventh Annual Unity Games. The Unity Games are the Corps' version of the Olympics, where CCC service districts from the North Coast to San Diego, assemble teams of corpsmembers and send them to Sacramento to compete in two days of friendly competition. (See story on page 1.) Teams take part in basketball and volleyball matches, swimming and racing relays, Frisbee competitions and even some wackier sports such as the water-balloon toss and crab soccer games.



The CCC Unity Games are not about competition. They are not about winning or losing. They never have been. The Unity Games are about esprit de corps, about camaraderie, about building community spirit. Our young men and women come to Sacramento each year for a weekend of fellowship and fun. They come to meet and to get to know their counterparts in the Corps who come from backgrounds and communities that are often vastly different from their own. This year, we had participants from the Sacramento and Fresno Local Corps programs and from Conservation Volunteers Australia. Corpsmembers get the opportunity to reunite with corpsmembers they might have encountered under different circumstances, perhaps while fighting wildfires, floods or other statewide emergencies.

The Unity Games take cooperation and participation not only from corpsmembers, but also from sponsors, supporters and CCC staff. We greatly appreciate the CCC Foundation for its sponsorship of the Unity Games and its steadfast support for corpsmembers. It takes everyone working together to create a good, positive atmosphere for our young men and women. The Unity Games are for our corpsmembers. CCC staff volunteer countless hours of their personal time to participate and help put on the Games. It makes me proud to see dedicated staff come out for the Games year after year and relate to corpsmembers on a different level. Special kudos to Lin McNamara for the huge role she plays in organizing the Games and for her leadership.

It was an honor for me to welcome everyone and officially open the 2002 Unity Games. I even managed to get in on the action as a member of the Headquarters basketball team. Whew! Those young corpsmember whippersnappers had a heck of a time trying to keep up with a seasoned hoops veteran such as myself (smile). It was a blast!

All kidding aside, though, the Unity Games seemed somewhat more meaningful this year because of 9/11. Never has it mattered more that we come together and that we continue to contribute to our greater communities. The work that our CCC corpsmembers do is vital to the state, the environment, the nation. I challenged our corpsmembers to continue to strive to be better people, better citizens of the world, and to help make our nation a stronger and more just nation. I challenged our corpsmembers to step up and make a change for the better. Many of them have done just that and I believe our tomorrows will be better for it.



LA CREWS JOIN GOVERNOR, FIRST LADY IN BEACH CLEANUP

CCC crews from Norwalk and Vernon and Main spent the Fourth of July at the beach, joining Governor Gray Davis and First Lady Sharon Davis in a coastline cleanup effort.

The cleanup took place at Dockweiler Beach in Los Angeles where some 24 corpsmembers joined the Governor and Mrs. Davis for the morning beach assignment. Conservationist 1s Frank Arzaga, Deric Barnes and Richard Parnell led the CCC crews in the effort. Volunteers from the Boys and Girls Club and participants from the Los Angeles Conservation Corps and AmeriCorps also assisted.



Photo: Bruce Saito

Los Angeles corpsmembers enjoyed working with, and then posing, with Governor Gray Davis.

While at the beach, the Governor announced more than \$23 million in state assistance to communities in three Southern California counties, as part of his Clean Beaches Initiative. "This coast is a vital part of our character," he said. "It deserves every protection government can afford, from Sacramento and from Washington."

Frank Arzaga said the Governor spent about an hour with the crews before being called away to deal with a shooting at Los Angeles International Airport the same day. While holding a news conference on the shooting incident, the Governor mentioned his morning work with the California Conservation Corps and other groups. The news conference aired live on CNN, MSNBC and Fox News.



SCOTT WOLSEY TO LEAD SHASTA CASCADE SERVICE DISTRICT

The California Conservation Corps Executive Team didn't have to look too far to find a chief for the new Shasta Cascade Service District. Scott Wolsey, who had been serving as the new district's Conservation Administrator, took the helm last month as its District Director, CCC Deputy Director Patti Keating recently announced. "Scott brings proven leadership skills to the post, as well as his vast fiscal, management and program experience," Patti said. "He will serve the district and its corpsmembers extremely well."

The new district incorporates some of the Shasta Pacific Service District territory, allowing for better oversight of the two geographically large district boundaries. "We are excited about having Scott join the CCC Executive Team and we look forward to his participation in future policy developments and issues," Patti said.

Scott's career with the CCC began in 1993 as a Conservationist 1 at Pomona, where he remained for two years before transferring to the Delta Service District. At Delta, Scott promoted to Conservationist 2 and Conservation Supervisor. He remained at Delta for more than four years. In September 2000, Shasta Pacific District Director Mel Krebs promoted Scott to Conservation Administrator 1 and to (out-of-class) Conservation Administrator 2 for Shasta Cascade. Prior to joining the Corps, Scott served as a Firefighter 1 in the California Department of Forestry.



CCC GRADUATES TAKE CENTER STAGE

In ceremonies across the state, parents, friends, corpsmembers and staff of the California Conservation Corps gathered to cheer and celebrate high school graduations and other notable achievements of California's young people.

CCC Director Wes Pratt attended several of the graduation ceremonies. "Congratulations to the Class of 2002," Wes said. "I would like to congratulate and thank the family, friends and significant others who were a source of support, strength, inspiration, hope and understanding to our graduates."

Graduation ceremonies honored graduates from all CCC service districts. At many ceremonies, the graduates expressed their gratitude and their belief in themselves.

"All of the graduates put so much time and effort to reach this point in our lives," said Larissa Wright, valedictorian of the Los Padres Service District San Luis Obispo Center Class of 2002. "All of you are looking at proof that setting a goal and following it through, does work. It's very important when you set a goal to make sure it's something you truly want. A high school diploma is something I truly wanted. I believe in myself and knew that this chance was something that would help me achieve my goal. Goals and dreams don't come over night so just stay focused and never give up."

Principal Don Brice and all the teachers of the John Muir Charter School played an important role in the graduates' educational achievements. "Thank you for encouraging, persuading, cajoling, urging and challenging our youth to reach for the stars of success that begin with the attainment of a GED or high school diploma," Wes said.

Celebrations took place at all CCC service districts.

Los Padres San Luis Obispo – About 125 people attended the California Conservation Corps' high school graduation ceremony at San Luis Obispo in mid-May. The ceremony celebrated the first seven graduates of the John Muir Charter School. "This was a fun event," said Jim Norton. "Proud corpsmembers and family and friends were everywhere. Both Corpsmember Development staff and John Muir Charter School teachers worked hard to prepare for the celebration and their efforts paid off with a thoroughly enjoyable ceremony." The *San Luis Obispo County Tribune* newspaper carried a story and photo of the celebration.

Photo: Tina Moore



Graduates from the Los Padres Service District celebrated with friends, family, CCC staff and Muir School teachers.



San Diego Service District — The San Diego Service District's John Muir Charter School Class of 2002 commencement ceremonies took place June 21 at the National City Civic Community Center. This year's ceremony honored 44 graduates who earned their high school diplomas and GEDs. CCC Director Wes Pratt and Muir School Principal Don Brice attended the ceremony. Clarence Johnson, one of the graduates has already joined the U.S. Navy. Sergio Gutierrez, another graduate transferred to the San Diego Service District's La Cima satellite, where he enrolled in its Culinary Arts Program. Big thanks to Muir School education specialist Mike Azavrskey and assistant Maria Ontiveros for their commitment and dedication to corpsmembers. Festivities included a reception saluting the graduates for their hard work and determination.

Sierra Service District — Eight Placer corpsmembers took part in a graduation ceremony with 30 others in Auburn through the Placer School for Adults on May 21 at the Placer High School Auditorium. Congratulations to the graduates David Doughty, Ryan Green, Ansel McClelland, Dave Newton, Billie Quesenberry, Neil Smith, and Daniel Yarbrough.

Also, the Sierra Service District participated in an all-service district Unity Day June 3. Sierra Conservationist 1 of the Year Carie Monroe, Corpsmember and Volunteer of the Year Erica Hargraves, and Student of the Year Ansel McClelland, were honored in special ceremonies. Tahoe Corpsmember of the Year Darin Guillot, Volunteer of the Year Josh Crain and Student of the Year Ray Liles, were also honored along with Outstanding Teachers David Reichel and Dawn Harkins.

Photo: James Roe

Los Angeles Service District — The Los Angeles Service District honored 26 corpsmembers who graduated with high school diplomas or GEDs. The graduates received Certificates of Achievement from state Senator Martha Escutia; Assemblymember Thomas M. Calderon, 58th Assembly District; Councilwoman Jan Perry, Councilwoman 9th District; and City of Norwalk Mayor Jesse M. Luera.



Los Angeles Service District graduates and District Director Walt Hughes.

Pacific Bays Service District — The CCC and the Napa-Solano Building and Construction Trades Council's Pre-Apprenticeship Program celebrated the graduation of 19 corpsmembers June 28. Representatives from the building and construction industry and the Employment Development Department attended the ceremony, along with CCC staff, corpsmembers and friends. The graduates represent the second graduating class of the pre-apprenticeship program, which began last year. "The class selection process was outstanding," said EDD's Gerald Uyeda. The project is funded under a grant from Governor Gray Davis' Workforce Investment Fund Act. It provides for a successful transition of graduates into professional union apprenticeship programs offered through the construction trades. CCC Director Wes Pratt and Field Operations Manager John Banuelos attended the graduation. "Our corpsmembers have benefited tremendously from this partnership with the Building Trades Council and the Employment Development Department," Wes said. "Their skills sets have increased, their self-esteem enhanced and they are better prepared for future careers in construction as well."



Unity Games Cont'd from page 1

After a few more choice words of inspiration, Wes declared, "Let the CCC 2002 Unity Games begin. Let's rock!"

Wes also thanked and acknowledged representatives of the CCC Foundation, including President Cindy Laubacher, Executive Director Susan DeMars, and board members Al Aramburu, Steve Swatt and Bobby Pena, who were on hand to check out the Games. Earlier, CCC Chief Deputy Director Patti Keating presented a plaque of appreciation to the CCC Board for their unwavering support of corpsmembers and for sponsorship of the Unity Games.

"It's thrilling for the Foundation to have the opportunity to bring all the corpsmembers from throughout the state together for the purpose of building spirit and building community throughout the Corps," President Laubacher said.

The First-Place trophy went to the Tahoe Savs. They also won the top prize in 2000. Second place went to the Camarillo Raw Dogs and Third to the Los Padres Granny Smith & the Golden Delicious. The Aussies came up the big winners, however, taking home the coveted Most Heart Award.

Aussie competitors Stewart Smith and Simon Taylor helped the Headquarters basketball team, while Mark Purcell, Michelle Einsaar and Louise Jones, tried their hand at the balloon toss and other sports. "This is normal school carnival stuff," Michelle said about the games. "We've done this kind of fun stuff back home at school in Australia."

Photo: Elisa Rocha-Bupara



The Australians had a smashing good time at CCC Unity games.

Photo: Elisa Rocha-Bupara



San Diego team members prepare for crab soccer competition.

Photo: Cynthia Aguayo



At left, a corpsmember sweeps to finish line in broom-can relay race.

Photo: Elisa Rocha-Bupara



Teams cooled off by diving into action.



Photos: Elisa Rocha-Bupara



CCC Foundation board members came out for some Unity fun.



Corpsmembers take a moment to relax.



Director Pratt's about to sink a three-footer.

Photo: Jennifer Parker

Miguel Fonseca from the Los Angeles Service District (Norwalk), participated in his first Unity Games. "It's pretty cool," he said. "It's nice to see and meet people from different districts. It's a great opportunity to meet new people and make some new friends. The Corps has really given me a head start at learning something new in life. I'm learning some new skills and hope to get into carpentry some day."

Former CCC staff member Bob Chow helped out at this year's Games just as he has done for the last seven years. He left the department last fall.

"I'm here for the corpsmembers," Bob said. "Bruce Walton and I have been here from the beginning. We really love this stuff. This is so cool. It's really all about the corpsmembers."



Corpsmember shows Frisbee toss style.



Two buddies talk strategy.



At left, former CCC staff member Bob Chow, Field Operations' Angie Fife and a corpsmember found a cool shady spot. At right, Lin McNamara directs the show as Rico Rodriguez and Mark Rathswohl look on.





Milestones

15 YEARS OF CCC SERVICE

Peggy Harwell, Pacific Bays Service District

Many of the corpsmembers that Peggy Harwell worked with when she first joined the California Conservation Corps constructed the Academy buildings that house today's Training Institute at San Luis Obispo.

"They built those buildings, all right," Peggy said. "The experience was excellent corpsmember training. They developed solid construction skills. It gives me a sense of pride whenever I go there because I was involved in the project and I know the corpsmembers who built them."

Peggy, who recently celebrated 15 years of service with the Corps, began her career at Fricot City. She had worked in graphics and printing before taking an Office Assistant Examination, at her mother's urging. She went to work at the Academy at Fricot City in San Andreas. She relocated to San Luis Obispo with the Academy and after two years transferred to the Construction Unit. It was similar to today's Pacific Bays/ Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program. She remained there until the unit was disbanded.

Peggy then transferred to the Santa Clara Service District, where she worked as a clerk for Joe Griffin. After a time, she decided to give the private sector a try and she took a leave of absence for about a year. Al realized that the work for private entities wasn't really for a good cause," she said. Al realized I could be doing something good with the Corps, that it was a worthwhile program for youth. I came back to the Corps with a new appreciation for the job and the program."

When she returned to the Corps, Peggy took on some administrative assistant duties and later project analysis. Al worked with reimbursement projects and with visiting crews from other districts, and got to know a lot of the sponsors," Peggy said.

Peggy currently works as a Staff Services Analyst at Mare Island in Corpsmember Development. She focuses on specialized training for corpsmembers. Al always wanted to be a teacher and this is pretty close to it," she said.

One of the highlights of her career with the CCC is the all-staff conference in 1987 in La Honda. "It was really cool," she said. "It was nice that we could all get together and share stories. We actually ended up recruiting some Conservationist 1s for the Academy from all the staff at the conference. It would be great to have another one and to trade stories once again."

Peggy has enjoyed working with the Corps, especially Joe Griffin, who has been a mentor, and with Paul Merryman and Kathy Hoffmann.

Peggy has come to appreciate the Corps even more and what it represents for the young men and women who join. "The Corps is where I want to be," she said. "We develop youth and we conserve our natural resources. I think it's one of the most important things we can impart to our youth. I hope to remain in the Corps, but to return perhaps to the San Luis Obispo or San Andreas areas, back to where I started."



Milestones

10 YEARS OF CCC SERVICE

Angie Wood, Shasta Pacific Service District

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency honored the CCC Fortuna's Waste Reduction Team last month and, as program coordinator, Angie Wood, was on-hand to receive the award.

"I volunteered to coordinate the program because it's something that I've become more aware of, and more interested in, during the last few years," Angie said. "No matter how much we do to reduce waste, there's always a little more you can do."

The EPA recognition gave Angie reason to celebrate, but it didn't end there. In July, Angie celebrated ten years of service with the California Conservation Corps. Angie joined the Corps right after high school. "It seemed like a good idea, so that's what I did," she said. She graduated from Session 125 at the CCC Academy in San Luis Obispo and was assigned to the Tahoe Center. Later she transferred to San Pedro, but found that she missed Tahoe, so she returned.

Angie worked for clerk Kathy Kline Minsky and benefited from Kathy's positive influence. Kathy was the one who suggested Angie take the Office Assistant examination. Later, Angie transferred to the SLO Center, worked for Business Services Officer Robert Mendoza, and passed an Office Assistant exam in Ventura.

After more than a year as a corpsmember at Tahoe, San Pedro, and San Luis Obispo, Angie went to work for the Tahoe Conservancy as an Office Assistant. She missed the CCC though, and returned as a half-time Office Assistant in 1990. She worked for Tahoe BSO Dan Friedman for two years, while using her CCC scholarship to attend Lake Tahoe Community College. "That was '92 and there were lots of layoff rumors, so I left the CCC to work as an Account Clerk II for the Department of Developmental Services," Angie said.

Developmental Services was very different from the CCC and not nearly as much fun or challenging, Angie said. With the Class B driver's license Robert Mendoza helped her obtain, Angie left DDS for Heavenly Ski Resort, but when the Tahoe Center had a vacant Office Assistant position, she was happy to reinstate.

In 1997 Angie was scheduled for layoff, but Shasta Pacific BSO Stephanie Moug called her about an Office Assistant vacancy in Fortuna. "After making a trip to Fortuna, and hearing the good things Lynda Burkhalter had to say about it, my husband and I had the thrill of taking our two cats on an eight-hour drive when we moved," she said.

After five years in Fortuna, Angie still enjoys the area and working for the CCC. "I'm glad I joined the CCC," she said. "It's a pleasure to work with people like Mel Kreb, Michelle Rankin, Michelle Rose, Bob Frechou, and Stephanie Moug because they're all so smart and competent. I'm more proud than I used to be about working for the CCC. I think that's because I've grown, the CCC has improved, and we have more to offer corpsmembers than we used to."



CCC'S FORTUNA OFFICE WINS EPA AWARD

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency honored several champions of the environment, including the California Conservation Corps' Shasta Pacific Service District's Fortuna Office.

"Thanks to the hard work of all the people here, we can say that our rivers are no longer catching fire," said EPA Regional Administrator Wayne Nastri. "Our skies are clearer, our land is better protected and our water is certainly purer. In cities and neighborhoods across the country, Americans are accepting their responsibilities to join together with communities, businesses, schools and all levels of government to address their local environmental challenges and build a brighter, safer and healthier world to pass on to our children. Today's winners set an example for all of us to follow. Today is a great day for all of us because we are here to honor all of you."

CCC Director Wes Pratt, Shasta Pacific's Michelle Rankin and Angie Wood attended the awards presentation in San Francisco June 6. Angie, who is the Fortuna Waste Reduction Team coordinator, and Wes accepted the award on behalf of the CCC.

"I'm glad to be here on behalf of the California Conservation Corps," Wes said. "We plan to use this as a 'best practices' for the other CCC districts in the state. We will continue to do our part to protect our rivers, our oceans, our mountains and our air, and we encourage all public and private agencies and organizations to do the same. Thank you very much for this award."

EPA cited the Corps for its commitment toward discussing, implementing and evaluating its waste reduction practices, procedures and solutions. The team began its waste reduction efforts by performing a waste audit then developing a yearlong strategy to improve its reduction and recycling practices. The EPA praised the Corps for numerous other practices, such as switching over to reusable laundry and lunch bags and crafting notepads out of outdated paper forms, among others.

"We've had support, commitment and participation from staff and corpsmembers," Angie said. "We're trying to make it part of the daily routine for everybody, staff and corpsmembers alike. We're hoping that if recycling, reducing and reusing becomes a part of their daily routine, corpsmembers will carry this on when they leave the Corps. It's sort of planting the seed for the next generation. Because we are a residential facility, we do generate a lot of waste. There are always challenges, but we just remind ourselves that we have to take little steps."

The EPA also honored 10 other California agencies and organizations as well as several from Nevada, Hawaii, Guam and Arizona.

Photo: Elisa Rocha-Bupara



Director Wes Pratt and Shasta Pacific's Angie Wood and EPA officials at ceremony.



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Corpsmember Profile

Vincent Vargas, Los Angeles Service District (Norwalk)

Photo: James Roe

*By Buzz Breedlove
CCC Deputy Director*

Crew Leader 2 Vincent Vargas works the evening shift in the Corpsmember Development unit at the Norwalk Center. Drawing upon his own life experiences, including his three years in the Corps, Vincent helps and encourages his fellow corpsmembers to succeed. This highly motivated 25-year old is both a student and an educator.

Vincent did not always consider himself a student. By the age of 18, he had dropped out of three high schools. "I wasn't motivated to succeed and I didn't know how to take advantage of my learning styles," he said.

Despite not graduating from high school, a more focused 18 year-old nevertheless continued his educational journey. He joined AmeriCorps in East L.A. and tutored children for a couple of years. "I really enjoyed it," he said. "I had become a Christian at the same time. It made me a better person." Vincent found that the more he worked with each child, the better they responded. "I learned that if I go by certain ethics, even if I'm not the best at what I'm doing, I will succeed."

After teaching, Vincent worked as a bank teller and as a telemarketer. Neither job captured his interests. While he worked, Vincent also explored college. In 1999, he joined the debate squad at a local community college. "I was good at research and developing strategies for the debates," he said. "My debating partner was highly intelligent."

Vincent planned to close out his debate career in a February 1999 tournament so he could devote his energy toward finding a good job. Vincent and his partner felt the sting, however, of losing all four matches of their final debate tournament. He decided he didn't want to finish his debate career on such a low note, so he committed to one more tournament.

While preparing for his final debate, Vincent called the CCC and visited a recruiter. Three days later, he closed out his debating career with an impressive 3 and 3 record in the top division of a college tournament. He headed for initial corpsmember training the next day.

Vincent's debate success and commitment to the Corps marked an important milestone in his life. As a corpsmember, he has achieved many other milestones, including serving as Corpsmember Advisory Board president, speaking at a C1 conference, and obtaining his GED, blue card and forklift certificate. He also earned an energy specialist certification, high school diploma, and his class B license. He taught COMET courses as a certified COMET crewleader.

Vincent also earned his crewleader 2 certification and an A. A. degree from Cerritos College. He currently serves as CAB secretary. He is determined to earn a college degree in English and a teaching credential so that he can become an elementary school teacher and write books for people with learning disabilities. Vincent would also like to return to the Corps in the future to run COMET.

Vincent credits his CCC mentors and peers for his success. His COMET instructor, Christian Herrera, was his first role model. Jose Murillo and Richard Parnell, two of his C1s, also provided important guidance. Vincent also credits James Roe, Francisco Tolley, and Lynette Rodriguez with contributing to his success. "I am thankful to Walt Hughes, the staff, and all of the corpsmembers," he said. "Before I leave the Corps, I want to do whatever I can to help corpsmembers, in whatever way possible."



Vincent Vargas



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MISSION STATEMENT

The California Conservation Corps engages young men and women in meaningful work, public service and educational activities that assist them in becoming more responsible citizens, while protecting and enhancing Californians environment, human resources and communities.

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A GIANT SALMON TELLS THE STORY

More than 60 Shasta Pacific Service District corpsmembers and staff helped supervise, educate, guide and entertain more than 400 local school children as part of the recent Kids Ocean Clean-Up project.



Elementary school children spell out their intentions.

The Ocean Clean-Up is a project of the California Coastal Commission and seeks to help make children aware of marine and coastal issues such as pollution and the harmful consequences of neglecting oceans and rivers. "It gives youngsters a chance to help out and develop a sense of community and responsibility," said Conservationist 1 Rachel Siska.

Locally, the event was sponsored and facilitated by the North Coast Environmental Center, which also sponsors CCC Humboldt Bay Service corpsmember Joshua Gorman. Joshua and other Humboldt Bay Service corpsmembers have spent many hours in classrooms teaching kids of all ages about the importance of keeping our oceans and rivers free from pollution. Joshua uses his watershed diorama to illustrate the effects of pollution on watersheds and coastal ecosystems. It's a fantastic way of engaging the kids and promoting an understanding of how humans affect the environment.

"This fun event is the culmination of our marine-debris education program, which has been well-received at dozens of schools in the county," Joshua said. "Kids really care about protecting our beaches."

The Ocean Clean-Up event helps put the classroom education to work. In the morning, the children gathered for an aerial photograph. They stood on the beach and spelled out "protect" in the shape of a giant salmon. The youngsters spent the rest of the morning picking litter off the beach and learning about the Manila Dunes. The "salmon" photograph made the local papers.